

THE ART OF SUPERCONSCIOUS LIVING

Swami Kriyananda



The whole spiritual life is a process of learning how to live superconsciously. There are the three states of consciousness that we all have—the subconscious, the conscious, and the superconscious. The conscious state is the only one that we are aware of. The others are in the background but that does not mean that they aren't influencing us. It's like a person talking quietly in a room with someone else shouting. You hear the person shouting but you don't notice the person quietly talking. But that one talking quietly may be influencing the people right around him.

The **subconscious mind** is much more influential than a quiet voice in the background because it penetrates to all of our conscious activities. To a large extent, the subconscious guides our actions, reactions, and habits. The subconscious is developed over a span of lifetimes through countless thoughts and impressions.

Part of this is absolutely necessary because the subconscious power of habit makes life work. Notice how long it takes little children to learn how to tie their shoelaces and how their fingers fumble. Yet once they've learned, it's easy. They can tie their shoelaces almost without looking.

The power of habit is exceedingly beneficial if we use it to free the mind for creative activity. Take the example of a pianist. It's only when he's trained his fingers to obey his commands automatically that he can really play with inspiration. Until that point, there is a barrier between his inspiration and the actual sound he produces.

The same principle applies to all of us. If everything that we did had to be done with a fresh exertion of will, we would have no energy left to grow and to do new things. We'd just be busy with all the mundane tasks of living.

The power of habit is beneficial in this sense. But the subconscious mind also represents a lower state of awareness. And although it's a very capable servant, it also has a predilection to guide us to the lower side of our nature. It tends to pull us down into lesser awareness.

The difference between the conscious state and the subconscious state is that you're more aware in the conscious mind. Similarly, you are much more aware in superconsciousness than in the conscious state.

I remember a very interesting dream that I had when I suddenly found myself flying. And I thought, "Well, this is a very peculiar thing to be doing, maybe I'm dreaming!" And I tried to reason it out to see whether I was dreaming or awake. And I finally reached the conclusion very logically that I was in fact awake. I was just doing something unusual. It was so surprising a moment later to wake up and realize I'd been asleep all the time, and even that careful process of reasoning was only a dream.

So also in the **conscious mind**, we see things with enough clarity to be able to reason it all out and we feel that we are awake.

But when you actually have the experience of waking up in the superconscious then you say, "My, goodness, it was as if I was just sleepwalking through my existence."

It's important to see how this relates right now to our daily life, and one aspect of it is how we respond to the difficulties of life.

One way people deal with problems is to become less aware. People do this with drinking and with drugs. They also do it with sleep. In one way or another they try to dull themselves.

Somebody hurts their feelings and they say "I'll never love anybody again because it hurts so much when I'm disappointed." So you see a large number of people who by the time they're forty have become numb. They've ceased to feel. They've ceased to rejoice because they've been hurt too often.



Like turtles they go back into their shell, back into a place where nothing can hurt them, where nothing can penetrate the wall that they've built around their egos.

There is another approach to life: the **superconscious** approach. It is to become more aware. To illustrate, think of an object set up on a stand. A wind comes up and knocks that stand over. But if you increase the size of the base of the stand, then the wind won't be able to knock it down. So also, if you can broaden your base of awareness, then you won't be hurt by the difficulties of



life. Somebody comes and says something unkind to you and you think, "Well, after all, life is a lot bigger than this little episode. It doesn't really matter." You see it as something very small, relative to the totality of life.

Being a turtle and going within your shell isn't really freedom from the problem anyway. It's out there waiting for you and it makes you afraid to ever come out, because that difficulty is still there. You can't escape your problems by withdrawing from them like a turtle.

Little children will get under the covers and think that they are protected. But how much protection does a blanket give? It's a delusion. There is no escape into the subconscious.

We are all tempted in the lower direction as well as inspired in the higher. There is in all of us this nostalgia for the womb, the wish that we could just hide in our cave and the problems would go away. All of us have this temptation.

The other side of it is we are all drawn to become totally aware. Instinctively, we sense that this is our true consciousness.

☞ *from a talk by Swami Kriyananda* ☞